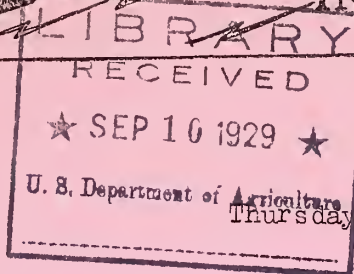


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Housekeepers' Chat

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "It's Time to Plant Bulbs for Spring." Information from W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, U. S. D. A.

Bulletins available: "Unfermented Grape Juice: How To Make It in the Home" and "Homemade Fruit Butters."

--ooOoo--

"Well, well, well! If it isn't Aunt Sammy herself! Give an account of yourself, young lady. Where have you been these past four weeks?"

W.R.B., the Garden Adviser, leaned his spade against the garden gate, and shook hands with me.

"Where have I been?" I said. "Down to the beach, W.R.B. And I learned to swim! Think of it! If you could only see me do the Australian crawl! Let me show you how--"

"Watch out!" warned the Garden Adviser. "Don't step on my tulip bulbs, Aunt Sammy!"

"Tulip bulbs," I repeated. "What a coincidence. The very thing I came over to see you about. I've heard that the bulbs you plant in the fall, tra la, have a lot to do with the flowers that bloom in the spring. If you'll tell me how to plant tulip bulbs, I'll show you how to do the Australian crawl. First, you take a stroke this way --"

"Watch out!" said W.R.B., picking up his spade. "This is no place to practice swimming strokes. Let's talk about tulip bulbs. It's about time they were in the ground, too. First you must prepare the soil for planting. Clean off all weeds, or remains of former crops. Then, if the soil is too dry to work, water it, and wait a day or so, till the water has penetrated. Then spread one pound of finely ground bone meal over each three square yards of surface, and spade the soil to a depth of eight or nine inches. Next, put on a second application of bone meal -- one pound of bone meal to each five square yards of surface. Rake the soil till all the lumps are broken, and the bed is nice and smooth."

"How far apart, and how deep, shall I plant the tulip bulbs?" I asked.

"Before you begin planting," said the Garden Adviser, "place the bulbs on top of the ground, seven or eight inches apart. First, place a row of bulbs entirely around the bed, about six inches from the edge. Then

arrange the bulbs more or less in rows or squares throughout the interior of the bed. After the bulbs are all placed, make holes with a long, narrow trowel and plant the bulbs, root-end downward, and four or five inches deep. On heavy soils, three inches may be deep enough, while on light, sandy soils five inches is not too deep. If the soil is dry at planting time, give the bed a light watering, and cover it with an inch or so of well-rotted manure. That's about all there is to do, except keep the beds free from weeds, until the bulbs begin to peep through the ground in the spring of the year, and possibly to watch that moles do not burrow in the beds and disturb the bulbs. There is also a possibility of mice following the runs made by the moles, and eating the bulbs. Moles can be controlled by the use of traps and poison."

"Tell me," I asked, "about planting crocus bulbs in the lawn, is that a good idea?"

"Yes," replied W.R.B. "You can plant crocus bulbs in your lawn, using a narrow trowel or a round stick to make the holes --- simply make a hole about two or three inches deep, drop the bulb in and cover it. Crocus bulbs remain from year to year, and give lovely blossoms in the spring time, before you start to clip your lawn. A little fertilizer scattered over the lawn each year, especially where the crocus bulbs are located, will help in their growth and give you better flowers."

"How about narcissus?" I asked next. "I'd love to have narcissus in my spring flower garden."

"Plant narcissus exactly the same as you would tulips," replied W.R.B., "only you can place them a trifle closer together. If you care to, you can leave narcissus in the same place, without being disturbed, for three or four years, or until they become so thick that they need separating. In separating the bulbs, wait until the leaves die in the summer, then dig the bulbs, dry them on screens, and store them for a time in a cool, dry place where they will get plenty of air. When late August or early September again rolls around, go over the bulbs, separate them, and use the larger ones for resetting your beds. The smaller bulbs may be planted in a special bed, or rather thickly in a row to increase your supply of flowering bulbs."

"Hyacinths may be planted in much the same manner as tulips; however, they do not need to be set in the ground quite so deep. They want a rich soil and may be planted somewhat later than either tulips or narcissus. I am particularly fond of the tulips and narcissus, especially where they are planted in little clumps or groups, in borders, and in the open spaces of the shrubbery beds. Sometimes I have a single tulip bulb growing in a bed of iris or some other plant, and I always admire those individual flowers at blooming time-- they seem to stand out so independently. Of course, the mass effect of a single variety of tulips or narcissus is very effective, but I really like the border plantings best. In some of my borders, I have tulip and narcissus bulbs which have not been disturbed for five or six years; they go on blooming, year after year."

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"I have heard," I said, "that the petals of tulips should be gathered before they fall; is there any reason for this?"

"Yes," replied W. R. B., "the petals of the tulips frequently have upon them a disease, which, if allowed to remain, will get on the leaves and injure the growth of the plants. By picking off and destroying the petals, you will avoid spreading the disease. It is some work to gather the petals, but it will doubtless pay, especially where only a limited number of bulbs are grown. Any more questions, Aunt Sammy?"

"Not today," I said. "Thank you for the garden advice, and don't be surprised if you get a load of letters from my housekeepers, asking for more."

I left W.R.B. to his tulip planting, and went over to consult the Menu Specialist about a Sunday dinner. You see I'm having company on Sunday -- Uncle Ebenezer's relatives are coming down from New York State, and I want to have something rather elegant. Tomorrow, I'll tell you about my Sunday Dinner.

Two questions to answer today. Question Number One: "Can you send me directions for making unfermented grape juice at home? We have an abundant supply of grapes this year, and I should like to prepare enough juice to use in beverages and desserts this year."

The answer to this question is in the bulletin called "Unfermented Grape Juice: How To Make It in the Home." Most people do not know that the process used in making grape juice is very simple, and inexpensive. I intend to buy a bushel or two of grapes this month, and make enough juice for special beverages and desserts. The fruit pulp can be used up in jellies, catsup, and so forth. I shall be glad to send the bulletin to anyone who wants it. "Unfermented Grape Juice: How To Make It in the Home" is the title. The bulletin is free.

The next question is about homemade fruit butters, apple butter with grape juice, to be specific. There are all kinds of recipes for apple butter in the bulletin on "Homemade Fruit Butters." Shall I send this bulletin to you? It is free.

Friday: "An Easily-Prepared Dinner for a Warm Sunday."

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